

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 053575

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TO ALL AMERICAN REPUBLIC DIPLOMATIC POSTS IMMEDIATE

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UNCLAS STATE 053575

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, EC

SUBJECT: PRESS EXCHANGE ON TUNA BOAT SEIZURES

THE FOLLOWING EXCHANGE CONCERNING TUNA BOAT SEIZURES TOOK PLACE AT THE MARCH 10 NOON BRIEFING AT THE DEPARTMENT WITH ROBERT FUNSETH THE SPOKESMAN:

Q: GOVERNOR REAGAN HAS STATED THAT, IN HIS VERY STRONG CONVICTION, AMERICAN CITIZENS SHOULD BE ENTITLED TO THE PROTECTION OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY ON THE HIGH SEAS VIS-A-VIS ECUADOREAN SEIZURE OF 139 TUNA BOATS. IT'S MY UNDERSTANDING THAT WE ARE NOT ONLY GIVING MILLIONS IN ECONOMIC AND MILITARY AID BUT WE'RE ALSO PAYING MILLIONS IN REGARD TO WHAT APPROXIMATES RANSOM. NOW, DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT FEEL THAT GOVERNOR REAGAN IS WRONG OR NOT?

A: WELL, I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE STATEMENT.

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PAGE 02 STATE 053575

Q- IT WAS ON PAGE 1 OF THE WASHINGTON POST THIS MORNING,
SIR.

A: I'M NOT FAMILIAR WITH THE STATEMENT BY GOVERNOR --

Q: YOU DON'T READ THE WASHINGTON POST OR WHAT?

A: REVEREND KINSOLVING, I READ THE WASHINGTON POST AND I
READ OTHER NEWSPAPERS. BUT WHAT I WAS TRYING TO SAY,

BEFORE YOU INTERRUPTED ME, WAS THAT I HAD NOT SEEN THE
STATEMENT OF GOVERNOR REAGAN.

Q: OH, I SEE.

A: NOW, AS FAR AS THE SUBSTANCE OF YOUR QUESTION,
REVEREND, WE DO NOT BELIEVE THE THREAT OR USE OF FORCE IN
THIS SITUATION WOULD BE APPROPRIATE OR EFFECTIVE.

Q: WELL, FORCE BY WHO?

A: WE ARE DISCUSSING THE PROBLEM WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF
ECUADOR, AND WE HOPE TO FIND A SOLUTION BY DIPLOMATIC
MEANS.

Q: COULD I FOLLOW THAT UP, PLEASE? AS I UNDERSTAND,
THIS HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR 23 YEARS AND WE'VE LOST 139
FISHING BOATS AND THAT THE AMERICAN TUNA BOAT ASSOCIATION
HAS BEEN PROTESTING FOR ALMOST A DECADE. HOW LONG, IN
YOUR ESTIMATION, DO YOU THINK THE STATE DEPARTMENT IS
GOING TO KEEP DISCUSSING THIS?

A: WELL, IT ISN'T A QUESTION OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT;
IT'S A QUESTION OF THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT.

Q: WELL, AREN'T YOU PART OF IT?

A: AND NO ONE HAS MINIMIZED HOW DIFFICULT THIS PROBLEM
IS, AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE MOST EFFECTIVE
WAY WOULD BE TO FIND A SOLUTION BY DIPLOMATIC MEANS. INGERSOLL

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